

August 1. 1710.

Occasional REFLECTIONS upon some Publick OCCURRENCES :

In a LETTER to a Friend.

Dear Sir,

Since you are so desirous to have an account from me of what passes from time to time, with my Judgment upon the most remarkable Occurrences, I shall endeavour to gratifie you as far, and as well as I can. I shall give you for *News* nothing but what I my self believe; and for my *Opinion*, nothing but what I sincerely think. And as you know I have no Biass upon my Mind, with respect of *Parties*, either of Favour, or Averſion; So you will not wonder if I now blame the *Tories*, and then the *Whiggs*, without incurring the Suspicion of changing my Side. I say my *Side*, and I say it at the same time that I expect to be thought *Impartial*. A Man may be in a *Party*, and not be of it; and he that has no Hopes, or Fears, for himself distinct from what he has for the Publick, may censure those whose Cause he likes best, where he thinks they are in the wrong; and will do it the more freely, by how much the more he hopes they may amend by his Admonitions. My Lord *Halifax's* Character of a *Trimmer* has not made me mislike those that deserve that Name; and I shall not think I need Quarter for endeavouring to keep that Boat steady, in which I my self am carried. Expect therefore that I shall freely censure all sides: If I do any good I have my aim; if not, you, Sir, however who have set me a Work ought not to find fault with me, especially since what you chiefly desire, is to have me speak freely what I think.

The first piece of News that I shall entertain you with is, that Mr. *Dyer* has now for several Posts said not one word for Dr. *Sacheverell*. For five or six weeks scarce a Post came in but brought accounts of his several Stages in his way to, and from, his Living; Of the Honours he receiv'd; of the Welcomes, and Acclamations with which the People met him; and of the Joy which they express'd when they saw the Man who had, as Mr. *Dyer* assures us, so *heroically contended for the Faith*. The Mayor of *Banbury's* Speech has been printed: At *Litchfield* the High-Sheriff, and the County, and the Government of the City, met him with the same Solemnity with which they would have met their *Sovereign*. At *Shrewsbury* he enter'd the Town with so much State, and was thronged with such Multitudes of People, that he was an hour in passing the Street before he cou'd reach his Lodging. The Nobility, Gentry, and Clergy, thro' his whole Journey treated him with the Honour due to an *Apostle*; and had the Service done to his Church, and Country, been as great as it is possible to be done by a mortal Man to either, till those who were at any time bless'd with his Presence, have not been at all behind hand in their Demonstrations of Gratitude tow'rd this wonderful Instrument of their Deliverance. You will not therefore be surpriz'd, Sir, if I look upon Mr. *Dyer's* Silence as a piece of News too considerable to be pass'd over, by One that undertakes to give his Judgment upon Publick Affairs.

There is a time when Men cease to give Advice: and he that has had Advice given him already in so solemn a manner as Dr. *S.* has had, is above all the Admonitions of a private Man. To tell him that he has been used as an Instrument in Great Mens Hands for them to work their Ends with; that many of those who thus careſs him think as meanly of him, as his busiest Friends said they did in the Parliament House; that they publickly declare that this suddain turn in the People must be from God, since it has been effected by the Foolishness of Preaching, understood in the strictest sense; that among their Friends they always distinguish between the Cause, and the Man, when they mention him: in a word, Sir, to tell him these and many other mortifying Truths, that are publickly talk'd of here in the Country will have no effect: and he

will impute it all to Malice, or Envy, in those who either are Enemies to the Church of England; or are uneasy at his having the Glory of *breaking the Neck of the Party*; which, during his Trial, he boasted in Conversation that he shou'd certainly do.

Leaving him therefore to ruminate upon the Glory of his Atchievements, I shall now consider the matter it self. And I must take the freedom to say, that the *Gentlemen* who have shewn him these unprecedented Honours, have done as much as Men cou'd possibly do to *destroy the Liberty of their native Country*, by an Action which at first view may seem to be of no great Consequence to the Publick. The Security of the British Subject lies in the *Freedom of a British Parliament*: If that be taken away, let it be by Prince, or People, it is eventually the same thing. This Freedom consists not only in making, or repealing Laws, and giving of Money; but in a Power of *accusing any Subject* whatsoever of such Crimes, and *Misdemeanors*, as do not directly fall under the Cognizance of any written Law. When therefore any Man is so impeached, tho' he should be acquitted, and the Impeachment appear to have been manifestly ill grounded; the Person so acquitted ought nevertheless to behave himself decently; and the People who are glad that he comes off, ought to shew a regard for that Authority which has accused him; Otherwise if that is treated with Scorn and Contempt, it may give too great Encouragement to Others to dare to do things with prospect of Impunity, which else they would not have had the boldness to attempt.

In the Case before us, the Person impeach'd *has been found guilty*, Sentence has been pass'd, which tho' a *slight one*, was yet a Sentence. In this, no less a Body than the *whole British Parliament* has been concern'd. Now to treat this Man with Honour, who has been accused by the *Commons*, and found guilty by the *Peerage of Great Britain*, may hereafter be such a Discouragement to *future Parliaments* from prosecuting those whom they may think guilty, as may be of fatal Consequence. For generally those deserve most to be impeach'd, who have the strongest Party to support them; and the reason is plain; for those Men will naturally dare most, who think they shall be the best supported. And such Men are the likeliest to get off: If then a *Parliament* shall immediately after a fruitless Impeachment be threatned with a *Dissolution*; the *Impeach'd Person* be carried about in Triumph over the Kingdom; and Addresses be sent up to the *Sovereign*, instantly to *dissolve the Parliament* for that Offence; what will probably be the Consequence? The *least* will be a Discouragement of such sort of Prosecutions, upon which our Liberties do so much depend. That is the least Mischief which can happen: Probably such a Flame may be kindled which no Man can tell where it will end: For those that had Strength enough to carry on an Impeachment, will not want Friends without doors to stand by them; and what the Event may be in such a Case, One that truly loves his Country will tremble to think upon.

That I own is not like to be the Case now. Both Parties love the *Queen*, and the *Protestant Succession*, too well to suffer their Heats to be fatal to the Nation. But still these Heats are much too great, and cannot possibly produce any good Effect. Addresses have been sent up to Her Majesty from most parts of *England*, for a *new Parliament*. And why? Because the *House of Commons* impeach'd Dr. *Sacheverell*. Is this an Offence big enough? In one *Session* more the Parliament will fall of it self, and then another will be chosen of Course; will this *Seditious Antimonarchical* (I had almost said *Rebellious*) *House of Commons* destroy the Church of England if they shou'd be permitted to meet one other Session? No wise Man thinks they would. Will not they Support the War, and provide for the Publick Exigencies of the Nation? That is not questioned. Will they attempt to *alter the Succession* of the Illustrious House of *Hanover*? that is not to be believed. Why then, during the War, must the Nation be put into such a needless Ferment?

All this is upon a Supposition that Her Majesty wou'd not *Otherwise* have *dissolved* the *Parliament*; and that if She shou'd do it now, it wou'd be only done in compliance with that Part of Her People who take this way to declare their Desires. No good

Subject

Subject will object against what Her *Majesty* shall in this Conjunction think fittest to be done. Her Affection to Her People is undisputed; and if it is a fault to treat a Parliament coarsely for their Proceedings, it is much more so to treat Her Majesty in that manner, for what She shall think at any time fittest to be done. We shall no more question Her *Wisdom*, than Her *Prerogative*, if She dissolves this Parliament. But without enquiring into the Reasons why Her Majesty thinks any thing proper to be done, we may lawfully examine into our Fellow Subjects Actions; and we may as lawfully pass our Judgments upon them.

If those that began this Impeachment threw the Nation at first into unnecessary Heats, those afterwards that made use of Dr. S.'s Name, and Person, in order to keep them up, and that promoted *Addressees* for a *New Parliament*, have certainly contributed but little to allay them. And who is most to blame, he that kindles a Fire, or he that will not lend a helping hand to quench it.

If one Party shou'd give out that we are not likely to have a Peace whilst the Management of the Treaty is in the Hands of those who get by the continuance of the War; are not they at least equally to blame by keeping up those Heats which must necessarily encourage the Common Adversary, and lead him into an Opinion that if they continue the War he shall at last get better Terms?

Have our Enemies shewn themselves, for these last 80 Years, so weak, as not to know how to profit by the Divisions of their Neighbours? Or are our Affairs brought to such a pitch of Strength, and Superiority over them, that we need not fear their making any Advantage of our Domestick Divisions? Have the *Dutch* been such ill *Allies*, that we can justify our selves in forcing them to submit to less honourable Terms, than they might reasonably hope to gain, if the *French King* were driven to believe that we wou'd oblige him to submit to what his Ministers consented to in his Name the last Year? Or can we hope to make a *separate Peace* that shall be more advantageous, than one that shall be made with the *joint Consent* of the *whole Alliance*.

Can those who in the late Reign impeach'd the then Ministry for promoting a *Treaty of Partition*, with a good grace now hinder the prosecution of a prosperous War, which, if vigorously carried on, will induce the *French King* not only to abandon his *Grandson*, but even to assist us in restoring the *House of Austria* to its undoubted Rights?

Should none of these be the Consequences of the present Heats, yet if they *probably may be so*, can those that industriously foment them, answer it to themselves, or their Country, especially when a little patience will bring their Ends about as effectually to themselves, and with less hazard to the Publick?

If the Nation is justly alarm'd with fears of Danger to the Constitution in Church, and State, those Fears will not die, and the Effects which they will naturally produce, will be equally powerful, when Peace abroad will set us at quiet to attend to Perils at home. Whereas if these Alarms are but imaginary, those that are now deluded, may be provoked to fall with greater weight upon the Persons of those who have so unreasonably misled them.

The upshot of the matter is this: Those that stood by Dr. S. ought to be content with their supposed Victory, and not carry their Exultations so far as to wound that Authority by which he was prosecuted, and tried, and let me add again, condemn'd, and censured. Those that make use of this Accident to inflame the Nation, ought to be careful that they do not, by mis-timing their Resentments, wound that Interest which they profess to support. If they are in the right, whatsoever you or I may think, the Event will justify them. But it is plain that the *Publick Credit* has been hurt, and they have not been able to keep it up: For I can hardly think them so weak as not to have been desirous to have kept it up, or rather to have rais'd it, if they could. Whereas upon a belief that these Heats wou'd fall of themselves, it has of late begun to rise a little again. If this will not teach them, I am sure nothing that you or I can say, will.

